

# THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21218

DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY

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Dear Colleagues:

I am terribly sorry that I cannot attend this current meeting in Jerusalem on the problems of Jewish scientists in Eastern Europe and, particularly, in the Soviet Union. The problem is an enormously frustrating one and, speaking for American scientists, there seems to be little one can do at the moment but to maintain a constant flow of letters to the proper authorities in the Soviet Union in relation to any single case. This approach may have had some effect in a few cases, particularly those like the exile of Sakharov to Gorki, where world pressure seems to have had some influence on the treatment of Sakharov and his family. It appears, however, that even a constant and heavy flow of mail from scientists in the United States generally has little effect.

Many of us belong to a number of organizations such as the Committee for Concerned Scientists, Scientists for Orlov and Shcharansky and the Helsinki Watch, and we are frequently brought up to date on the situation of individual scientists and the occurrence of new instances of harassment and imprisonment. I happen to be a member of the Human Rights Committee of the National Academy of Sciences. The Academy has taken the stand that individual contact of American scientists with Soviet scientists is probably a good thing, when interaction deals with specific scientific matters of mutual interest. Such interchanges at least maintain a thread of communication that might eventually be useful under the right circumstances.

I personally believe that a most useful step might be emphasis of the problem of persecution of Jewish scientists by leaders of Western states in connection with negotiations on other matters. A significant decrease in discrimination against and oppression of Jewish scientists and of the dissident population would be a signal that the basic philosophy of the Soviet power structure was undergoing changes in the direction of a greater democratic ambiance for its citizens. The human rights question in general should become a constant factor in the negotiations of the Western world with the Soviet Union. The USSR tends to be willing to give on certain points when it feels that it can gain in connection with others.

At the moment there seems to be little more that we can do than to maintain heavy pressure by mail and telephone on the proper authorities in the Soviet Union. I feel confident that such an effort will continue to be made by a significant fraction of the American scientific population. Best of luck with your considerations at this meeting. If new approaches and techniques grow out of the deliberations that might help scientists in other countries to be more useful, please let us know.

Best regards,

Christian B. Anfinsen